



## ***Embracing Business Preparedness***

*by Cecilia Matta*

How do you create a “Safe and Prepared” culture at your company, and why should you? At Weyerhaeuser Realty Investors (WRI), an emphasis on safety and wellness has its roots in their wilderness logging origins, according to Steve Margolin, WRI President and Red Cross Board member.

“Many of our employees do more dangerous work than sitting at a desk, but we have incorporated safety into our corporate philosophy for all employees for years,” Mr. Margolin noted. “All staff meetings start with a safety message, from the importance of locking and anchoring office file cabinets to seasonal safety messages about boating and safe driving.”

Steve described these elements of WRI’s safety and wellness culture:

1. **Management driven:** The top dogs must lead, encourage and support a safety champion.
2. **Conduct an annual Safety Audit:** 35 pages at WRI.
3. **Safety Goals:** All employee performance appraisals have them.
4. **Conduct monthly safety drills:** Fire and evacuation, earthquake Drop-Cover-Hold and how to operate the fire extinguisher.
5. **Crisis Plan:** Create and publish your response plan. WRI’s is a tabbed flip chart. At Washington Dept. of Revenue, their disaster planning team developed a tabbed booklet, with bulleted basic steps for emergency response to 15 types of emergencies. Every staff member gets one.
6. **Safety Inspections:** Conduct annual and monthly safety inspections that include ergonomics, emergency contact information, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and emergency supplies.
7. **Accent the positive:** Promote safety with positive incentives. WRI has a “Safety Buck” drawing, where staff may report safety issues, as well as nominate themselves or others for fixing safety problems.

Whether you run a ten-person CPA practice, a full service beauty salon or a multi-national realty investment company, you want your business to survive a business interruption, to keep your personal economy thriving and to take advantage of all opportunities. By investing in safety, planning and preparedness activities now, you strengthen your company’s ability to manage change everyday, not just in a crisis.

Call on your Red Cross as a business preparedness resource. From disaster preparedness and CPR training to emergency kits and business continuity planning templates, we can support your readiness for natural and human-made emergencies. Get started soon with these two basic activities:

1. Jump-start or reconvene your Safety Committee.
2. Participate in the Washington Statewide Earthquake Drill on April 21, 2005, 9:45 a.m. Practice “Drop-Cover-Hold” now and get everyone in your company and your building to do it in April!

At the Red Cross, we provide disaster relief, but we also help people and businesses prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. For more information on Workplace Preparedness, contact Cecilia Matta, 206 726-3507/360 377-3761 or [cecilia.matta@seattlredcross.org](mailto:cecilia.matta@seattlredcross.org).

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